CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 30 MAY 1994 FROM THE DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ENCLOSING A DOCUMENT CONTAINING THE COMMENTS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY ON THE MAINTENANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS REGISTER OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS AND ITS POSSIBLE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

I have the honour to forward to you a document containing the Comments of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Maintenance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its Possible Further Development.

I would appreciate it very much if you could take the appropriate steps to register this document as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament as well as a Working Paper of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments, and to have it distributed to all member delegations and non-member States participating in the work of the Conference.

(Signed): Dr. Stephan Keller
Deputy Head of Delegation

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Comments of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Maintenance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its Possible Further Development

The Federal Republic of Germany communicates herewith considerations on the maintenance of the United Nations Register during the first two years, on the inclusion of further categories of armaments, and on extending the Register to include data on military holdings and procurement through national production.

The considerations are based on

- the evaluation of notifications received for the calendar year 1992;
- the responses received at the beginning of February 1994 from the group of Government experts appointed by the Secretary-General relating to their first working session at the beginning of February 1994; and
- the results of the regional conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations at the beginning of 1993.

I.

The purpose of the United Nations Register is to secure, on a global basis, openness and transparency in armaments, to promote confidence-building and thus to prevent miscalculations deriving from the presumed military intentions of States.

Against this background it is necessary to increase the Register's acceptability and ensure the widest possible participation. Only thus can it serve its main purpose as a global confidence-building measure. Initially, therefore, the Register's consolidation and optimization should have priority over its further development.

The participation of 83 States in the first exchange of information in respect of the year 1992, and especially the fact that about 90 per cent of all arms transfers were accounted for, is a positive result. On the other hand, less than half of all United Nations Members have registered their transfers. There are also significant regional differences. The United Nations regional organizations and each individual Member of the United Nations should take suitable steps to secure the Register's worldwide validity.

The discrepancies and technical deficiencies with regard to the notifications made during the first year under review can be considered teething troubles. We expect the notifications for 1993 to be substantially better as to both form and substance. None the less, the Register should be kept clear and simple in order to encourage wider participation.

The four regional seminars sponsored by the United Nations have been useful and similar ones should be held especially in the regions where the United Nations Register has so far met with little response.

As regards the divergencies in the interpretation of the category definitions and on the question of what constitutes an arms transfer, agreement should be sought by the group of Government experts and the ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments of the Geneva Disarmament Conference. One pragmatic approach would be for each country to state its definition of an arms transfer as an additional, obligatory item on the notification form. A further clarification is also required with regard to complex bilateral/multilateral joint production projects which up to now have led to the submission of reports which do not correspond with one another.

Where possible additional background information should be included in every report. The same applies to information on national holdings. It would therefore seem logical to use for this information the arms categories that apply to the notification of exports and imports.

This additional information should be made available as soon as possible by the United Nations Secretariat, together with data on imports and exports, in the form of a comprehensive, consolidated report.

II.

The deliberations on the register's further development focus on three main aspects:

- the formats for notifications;

- the refinement of the existing categories, i.e. the introduction of subcategories;

- extension of the register.

The formats have generally served the intended purpose. It is urgently necessary to introduce a heading under which each country can give its definition of a weapons transfer. Greater use should be made of the "remarks" column, to include for instance details on types, calibre and other specifications of weapons systems or particularities regarding the transfer of weapons systems resulting from co-production. This kind of information, too, should be made mandatory.

Experience shows that the present seven main weapons categories have not in every case been defined as precisely as would be desired but on the whole represent a balanced compromise which has proved adequate for the time being. On the other hand, there is room for careful and step-by-step improvements. For instance, the proposal for further restricting the tonnage of warships is worth consideration. As regards the notification of missiles and delivery systems, it would appear expedient to count them separately. Further consideration should also be given to the suggestion that delivery systems need not be notified at all since they are usually fully integrated into the

weapons systems covered by categories III, IV and VI (artillery systems, combat aircraft, warships) and the present counting method may give rise to uncertainty.

The tendency towards extending the register appears particularly promising. Reports on national military stocks procurements from domestic production should be a mandatory element of every notification. In this way even countries that do not export or import weapons could be actively involved in the notification regime, thus making for much greater global transparency and confidence-building. Suggestions for further improvements are currently being discussed in the ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments of the Geneva Disarmament Conference. The results of their deliberations, too, should be made available to the group of Government experts.

III.

The Federal Republic of Germany will continue to play an active part in the further development of the United Nations Weapons Register in order to ensure that, after a good start, this confidence-building instrument can be globally applied. It would seem expedient for the United Nations Secretary-General to call another meeting of experts to review the maintenance of the register and the possibilities for its further development on the basis of the experience gained to date.

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